



Appendix D

A Northern California Coastal Conservation Needs Assessment

Humboldt County Meeting Summary

The following is a summary of meeting notes and questionnaire responses collected at the Humboldt County Linking Land and Sea meeting held at the Humboldt County Agricultural Center on February 18, 2006. The meeting was attended by 29 people. Twenty-three people completed a *Regional Coastal Conservation Planning and/or Implementation Questionnaire*. The results were summarized by Ruth Blyther, project consultant, and include input from the group discussion and questionnaires.

I. Do we need more regional coastal conservation planning?

Written responses (23 total):

Yes – 10 total. Seven people noted that the need was for marine and nine for connecting marine and terrestrial plans. Three people noted the need for more terrestrial planning.

No – 3 total. All noting we don't need more regional terrestrial planning

Maybe – 5 total. If they address site specific issues; if we categorize the plans we have and then fill the gaps.

Not Sure – 5 total. These people felt they did not know enough about existing plans to answer the question.

Comments (from group discussion and questionnaire):

We need a better understanding of what plans currently exist, and how they link together and compliment each other. There is a lot of variability in existing plans, very few are peer reviewed. Is the information in the reports relevant and recent? "I am one of those people who would like to understand the current conditions of and future plans for both land and sea in the 3 county region, but do not have the time or experience to review the plans and come to personal opinions."

The region needs a mechanism to knit together existing efforts both those that have been completed and those that are planned. This mechanism should include a spatial representation of existing plans, a database with links, and should be centrally-housed and be updated in perpetuity. There is a lot of this type of information for watersheds throughout the north coast region contained on KRIS Web (www.krisweb.com). KRIS Web contains annotated bibliography of plans, documents, studies and geospatial data. This information is provided in separate watershed data bases, such as KRIS Noyo, KRIS Navarro, etc.

It would be useful to categorize the existing plans (marine and terrestrial) and to clearly identify the gaps that exist. Having a few people who are knowledgeable about what exists who can then educate others would be very helpful. Conservation

plans should be cross referenced with other plans such as economic, transport, and land use plans. “We need to understand what the conservation goals are (or

Linking Land & Sea



Comments from Question 1 (continued):

could be) then have the current plans reviewed to see if the information to support the goals has been identified.”

It would be useful to integrate existing plans as many of them have a narrow focus (ie birds, open space, development, land use). Existing data gaps should be identified and a prioritization for filling them should be completed. Integration of plans could occur after data gaps are filled.

A. If we need more regional coastal conservation planning, then what type of planning is needed?

a) Marine Planning – During the group discussion 16 of the 29 people indicated that there is a need for more marine planning (55%). In the written questionnaire responses 12 people out of the 23 responding indicated the need for more marine planning (52%). Several people who filled out the questionnaire did not respond to this question.

Comments:

We need basic marine habitat mapping (GIS layers of marine resources) to be conducted in this region (sea floor mapping). The region needs a mechanism to identify and monitor who is doing what; plan objectives and scales. There should be a mechanism for information sharing and data management for marine planning. This would increase efficiency and reduce duplication. Need regional and local data on fish recruitment and to document the importance of estuaries/bays to marine fish recruitment. There is very little information available regarding marine resources for the north coast.

b) Terrestrial Planning - During the **group discussion** 2 of the 29 people indicated that there is a need for more terrestrial planning (7%). In the **written questionnaire** responses only 3 people out of the 23 responding indicated the need for more terrestrial planning (13%). Seventeen people did not indicate terrestrial planning as a need (7 people who responded Yes; 4 Maybe; and 6 Not Sure to question #1). Three people responded in the negative – No more terrestrial planning.

Comments:

The Humboldt County Planning Department has piles of existing (terrestrial) plans, and no one person can know what is in all of these plans. There are so many terrestrial conservation plans and we do not know what they all say, so it is difficult to know if we need more and what we need (note the Conservation Prospects for

the North Coast has a good synopsis). Seems like it would be good to take a break in terrestrial planning so people can catch up with what exists.

Linking Land & Sea



Question #1A: What type of planning is needed (continued):

c) Address Connection between Terrestrial and Marine

All twenty-three of the respondents noted this as a need.

Comments:

We need regional and local information on how terrestrial influences are affecting the marine environment. For estuaries we need to know, “What’s being done to protect and enhance estuaries in our region?” What are the current conditions of and threats to regional estuary habitats? (This has been addressed somewhat in the TNC and SRL regional planning efforts).

We need more education regarding the linkages between marine and terrestrial ecosystems. Anadromous fish are an obvious link, but there are also others such as the Marbled Murrelet and many other species that move between the two; impacts of river water quality on marine resources; long term effects of global warming on ocean levels, etc.. What are the sediment impacts from the major rivers on the near shore habitat? (there have been a couple of reports done – Jeff Borgeld’s strataform project, HSU Thesis on Eel River Sediment impacts on kelp beds.)

There are data sets already available for development of some of marine/terrestrial relationships. But there are plenty of data gaps regarding marine/terrestrial ecotone that should be categorized and prioritized (mapping of marine habitats, identification of marine species nursery habitats, water quality impacts to marine environment, depiction of seasonal changes and natural variation, bathymetry etc.).

d) Specify Regional Priorities

Five people noted this as a need on the questionnaire.

Comments:

Regional priorities should be specified and based on ecosystem-based management. Such a plan should identify ecosystem-based management projects for watershed/estuary/near-shore ecosystems. There is a need to conduct more estuary planning. There is a specific need for an estuary restoration plan for Humboldt Bay/Eel River. There is a need for a marine plan that identifies regional priorities.

e) Implementation Strategies for existing plans

In group discussion 16 of the 29 participants indicated this as a need (55%). In the written responses 9 of 23 noted this as a need (39%).

Comments:

Funding for this is needed (NOAA). This isn't really part of a planning strategy, but is actual implementation of identified strategies. This is where we need to focus our efforts.

Linking Land & Sea



Question #1A: What type of planning is needed (continued):

f) Other – We need plans that

Nine people identified this as a need and provided input.

Comments:

We need plans that: Forecast trends, what will happen if we continue on the same path? Modeling is important to help us understand the impacts of our management decisions. Trend forecasts can be a real motivator for policy implementation. For example the impact of the North West winds on our ecosystem and what effect global warming has on these. The impact of a krill crash, “What do we do when the crash occurs?” Are we ready to react before or if that happens?

The region needs a way to organize, summarize and catalogue existing plans (this has been done for terrestrial in the Conservation Funds, Conservation Prospects for the North Coast, but not for marine plans). There is a need for more geographically focused plans that address estuarine restoration in Humboldt Bay; and cover the Eel and Smith Rivers, and the coastal tributaries that have been overlooked in planning (Bear River). There is also a need for plans/strategies that address site specific issues along the coast such as improved access/trails, discharge to ASBS/Critical Coastal Areas. We need basic marine habitat mapping.

In addition to ecosystem-based planning, we need assistance with sociological planning and getting the political support required for conservation in this region (ie hire Karl Rove if he can get Bush elected he can help us a lot!).

B. Who would be the target audience for such a plan? Who would use it?

Fourteen people responded to this question. Their answers were diverse and basically all stakeholder groups were covered. The audience recommendations range from all conservation entities to the urban populations and included:

Government Agencies (9) - Regulatory and funding agencies (main objective should be funders, to help with project prioritization); resource management agencies especially marine habitat and fisheries managers; and local coastal planners and decision making bodies.

Implementation organizations (5) - that use plans for a framework for adaptive management. Entities that could implement the strategies identified, and regulators with the potential to obstruct or assist with implementation.

Private property owners (3)

General Public (6) - Unintended users, much of this information in existing plans is focused on single user groups, but it could be tremendously valuable to many other interested parties and the general public. The public needs education especially the

urban population to increase buy-in for coastal conservation. More education is needed on the linkage between marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

Not Sure (2)

Linking Land & Sea



2. Is there a need to integrate terrestrial and marine plans?

Sixteen (70%) out of 23 people provided written response to this question, and all of them agreed that this is a need, although there was uncertainty about how it could be accomplished.

Comments:

The need is for implementing actions that have clear benefits to terrestrial and marine resources. For the north coast region there is a need to first finish the marine planning and then integrate the two if that need is identified. Aside from estuaries and fish, the regional terrestrial plans have not identified linking terrestrial with marine ecosystems/resources as a need.

Integrating terrestrial and marine plans will be difficult because typically the regulatory agencies don't overlap, needs may be different and difficult to integrate. The main need is to educate folks on existing plans so they can see the linkages. From a marine perspective we need more information on the effects of terrestrial on marine resources (ie sediment, pollutants, freshwater influence).

Estuaries are not included in the marine planning and in general terrestrial plans also avoid the estuaries. There is a need for estuary planning in the region, and this is the area where there is a clear linkage between the two ecosystems.

A. How could this be done?

Make the existing plans available and accessible, and create a regional annotated bibliography with synopsis for the marine plans. Develop a spatial data base that shows the plans and how they connect and overlap. Build a GIS that has each plan as a layer that groups complementary/overlapping plans. Develop a matrix of plans to identify coverage and gaps along with a map that identifies the areas that existing plans cover.

Focus on areas of interest (stormwater entry points and sources, ASBS, etc). Create watershed, estuary, near shore and open coast connections. Provide a way for people to understand the connectivity (Hug a manatee strategy, Protect the Bay, Everyone Lives Downstream etc). Connect the continuing loss of Eel River top soil with the marine effect of the silt tonnage from this river. Look for correlations of patterns in freshwater and saltwater data.

3. What do you think are the most important gaps in existing coastal conservation plans?

Thirteen people responded to this question (56%).

Comments:

Important gaps include: Long range forecasts, specific implementation and funding strategies, estuary plans, integration of existing plans, resource management on private lands, and various data gaps.

Linking Land & Sea



Question 3: What do you think are the most important gaps? Comments (continued):

We need reliable **long range forecasts** and information on trends in ecosystem change/impacts – so people know where we are headed. Forecasts can be used to add a sense of urgency and increase public awareness and support for conservation.

Most of the existing plans for the region lack specific **implementation and funding strategies**. A significant gap is being able to identify actions that will affect the most critical limiting factors or “drivers” of habitat degradation and then having the resources to do something about them. There is a lack of direction on implementation in many of the existing plan recommendations. Planning and recommendations for estuary conservation are lacking.

We need to have better **integration** of existing plans. Need to address resource management on private lands. Need seamless coverage of the coast with comparable data sets, so we can see patterns. The Critical Coastal Areas program seems to be using a one strategy fits all approach, this should not be the case.

There are significant **gaps in data and information**, coastal monitoring, and plans that address estuary restoration. There is a lack of fish data that show where fish nurseries are: Off shore? Near shore? Deep reefs? You can manage fish and conservation only if you have these focused data to support the management decisions. It would be very helpful to have Lidar coverage implemented on regular basis.

4. Do we need more specific (local geographic focus or resource focus) plans within the region?

A total of 13 people responded to this question. (Yes, 8; No, 3; Maybe, 2).

Comments:

Yes – if they include priorities for implementation, action plans and the permitting to carry them out. No - these should emerge through various parties making opportunistic use of existing plans. Maybe - we need better idea of what exists already

A. If so what specific focus would you like to see?

- **Geographic focus** - Ten Mile, Albion, Humboldt Bay and Eel River estuaries Humboldt Bay and Eel River. Eel River water supply, sediment supply and fisheries. There is insufficient planning for the Eel River. Look at the plans for the Garcia

River and Mattole River as examples of good conservation plans. Not sure about the Smith River it may be considered to clean to draw resources?

- **Resource Focus** - Restoration of diked tidelands. Coastal plans, which are a nexus of natural resource, agriculture, recreation, and residential/commercial values. Terrestrial land management and how it relates to marine protected areas (CCA, ASBS)

Linking Land & Sea



Question #4 A: What kind of specific plan focus would you like to see? Comments (continued):

- **Adaptive management** plans with political will to implement plans. (More planning seen as a way to stall on hard decisions that politicians don't want to make.)
- **Socio-Political.** Need to reinvigorate the urban environmental "calendar" to get votes to support conservation efforts. People in urban areas need to care about this area – education.
- Management plans for **private lands.** Generally single ownership, small scale plans to address soil, water, air, plants, animals and humans, generally in agricultural context (NRCS).

5. We don't need more planning we need to focus on implementing the plans we already have.

A total of 16 people responded (70%). Strongly Agree, 8 (for terrestrial); Somewhat Agree, 4; Neutral, 2; Somewhat Disagree, 3; Strongly Disagree, 1 (for estuaries and marine)

Comments:

A lot of planning does not get implemented. Implementation will happen regardless of whether you plan or not – so if you do more planning "How do you make sure the plan reflects the reality of ongoing implementation?" We need better coordination of projects that are being implemented by numerous land managers and entities. "How can we connect projects and land management across ownerships and across public/private and agency to agency?" Rather than piecemeal conservation we need better ways to collaborate and do conservation on a larger scale by linking efforts. From a land managers point of view we want to coordinate with adjacent properties. Agencies need to coordinate and communicate with each other and with private efforts.

The need is to implement actions that have clear benefits to terrestrial and marine resources. Plans are much like statistics they are used by people to prove they are right but unless they are implemented no water quality improves, fish pop increase etc. We need both - implement existing plans and fill gaps where needed. Adaptive management is the key. Implement what is "on the shelf" but build upon what will be done or needs to be done.



Notes on questionnaires not related to a specific question.

It is important to note the objectives of each plan – for instance the marine plans – several are for management, some are used to develop requests for proposals etc. In a future presentation stating the objectives of each plan would assist the participants.

BLM has done a lot of planning they are data rich but information poor. We need to work with other organizations to go after dollars that are not federal as federal funds for BLM are drying up. Need Cooperative Agreements between government entities and non-profits to cooperate on applications for funding. Need to develop better partnerships.

As Redwood Forest Foundation, Inc. the Conservation Fund's Conservation Prospects for the North Coast is sufficient to help us identify properties that a broader group of stakeholders are interested in (with whom we could create partnerships for acquisition).